



AMERICA AFTER 3PM

The most in-depth study of how America's
children spend their afternoons

October 2009





For many adults in America, thinking about the hours after the school day ends conjures up memories of doing homework, playing pick-up basketball, taking guitar or dance lessons or going home to Mom and a snack. But for millions of children today, those images are nothing like their reality. In fact, each day in America, some 15 million children—some as young as five years old—are without supervision at home or on the streets.

Children who are unsupervised after school are not only in danger of becoming victims of crimes or accidents; they are also at risk in other less dramatic but equally troubling ways. These 15.1 million children are at risk of falling behind academically, socially and emotionally. They are at higher risk than other children and youth of substance abuse, gang involvement, teen pregnancy and dropping out.

A small but growing number of our children are avoiding these pitfalls and reaping the benefits of quality, affordable afterschool programs – programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families.

Until 2004, there was little reliable data about how children spent the hours after schools close and before parents return home from work. Experts estimated that five to 15 million kids were unsupervised after school. There also was no reliable data on the number of children in afterschool programs, and how many families sought but did not find the programs they needed.

In 2004, the Afterschool Alliance and the JCPenney Afterschool Fund commissioned the most in-depth study ever to examine how America's kids spend their after school hours – *America After 3PM*. Conducted by RTi, a market research firm, *America After 3PM* definitively answered questions such as:

- What are kids doing after school?
- How many kids are in afterschool programs?
- How many kids go home alone?
- What is the demand for afterschool programs?

In spring 2009, the Afterschool Alliance and the JCPenney Afterschool Fund again worked with RTi to update the study to determine how things have changed since 2004. In total, nearly 30,000 households were surveyed for the 2009 update to *America After 3PM*. While there is good news to report, it is also clear that there is much more to be done to give all children and families access to quality afterschool programs.

This updated *America After 3PM* study offers the most comprehensive and accurate picture in five years of what this nation's children are doing each day after school. It provides detailed information about parent attitudes toward after school care and satisfaction with afterschool programs, and data about demand for afterschool, including the likelihood that non-participating children would join afterschool programs if they were available.



AMERICA AFTER 3PM

Key Findings

- More than a quarter of America's schoolchildren are on their own after the school day ends, and before parents get home from work. Despite growing awareness that children are at particular risk during these afternoon hours, the number and percentage of children left on their own in the afternoons has actually increased in the last five years.
 - The number of children who are unsupervised in the afternoons has risen from 14.3 million (25 percent) in 2004, to 15.1 million (26 percent) in 2009.
 - Today, 30 percent of middle school students (3,722,219) and four percent of elementary school children (1,133,989) are unsupervised after the school bell rings.
- The availability of afterschool programming for kids has improved in the last five years and families are taking good advantage. But there are not enough programs to keep pace with rising need.
 - The number and percentage of children participating in afterschool programs has increased significantly since 2004, with 8.4 million children (15 percent) now participating. That compares with 6.5 million children in 2004 (11 percent).
 - Parents of 18.5 million children (38 percent) who are not currently participating in afterschool programs say they would enroll their children if a program were available to them. That is a significant increase from 15.3 million (30 percent) in 2004.
- While ethnic minority children are more likely than others to be in afterschool programs, millions are unsupervised each afternoon and the unmet need is huge.
 - Twenty-five percent of Asian-American, 24 percent of African-American, 21 percent of Hispanic and 16 percent of Native American children attend afterschool programs, compared to the national average of 15 percent.
 - Yet 28 percent of African-American, 21 percent of Hispanic and 24 percent of both Asian-American and Native American children have no adult supervision after the school day ends.
 - While two in five parents overall (38 percent) would enroll their children if afterschool programs were available, more than half of African-American (61 percent) and Native American (51 percent) parents, and nearly half of Hispanic and Asian-American parents (47 percent), say they would.
- The economy is taking a toll on participation in afterschool programs.
 - Parents cite a number of barriers to enrolling their children in afterschool programs with more than half of parents (52 percent) citing cost and more than one in four reporting hours of operation (26 percent) and availability (27 percent) as reasons for non-participation.



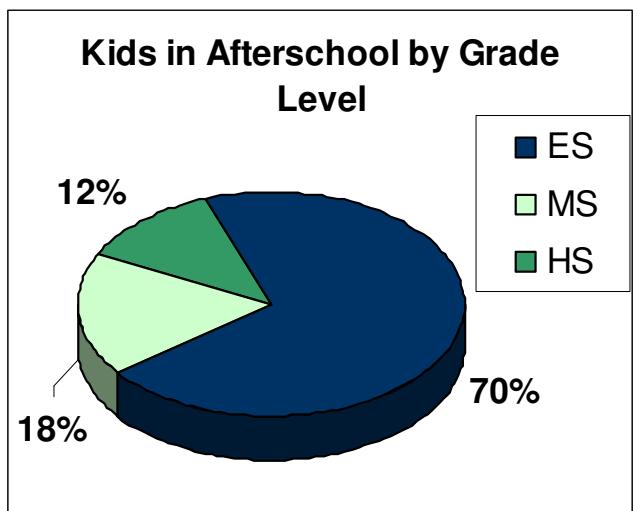
- On average, parents who pay for afterschool programs pay \$67 per week, up from an average of \$44 per child per week five years ago.
- Nearly one in three households (31 percent) report that their children are spending more time in the care of a parent after school now than a year ago. Reasons include changes in work status and availability/affordability of programs.
- While overall satisfaction with afterschool programs remains consistent since 2004, mean satisfaction is down on several factors, including cost, location and number of days/hours per day a child can attend a program.

- Americans see afterschool programs as an answer. The vast majority of parents of children in afterschool programs are satisfied with the programs their children attend, and public support for afterschool programs is unusually strong.
 - Nine in 10 parents (89 percent) are satisfied with the afterschool programs their children attend.
 - Nine in 10 parents surveyed (91 percent) agree that there should be “some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school every day that provides opportunities to learn.”
 - Eight in 10 parents (83 percent) support public funding for afterschool programs.
 - Parents recognize that afterschool is more than just a safe place for kids. According to parents of children in afterschool, the top benefits of participation include helping with social skills, keeping kids safe, providing opportunities to be physically active and helping their child succeed in school.

<i>America After 3PM 2009 Compared to 2004</i>	National Percentages	
	2009	2004
Percentage of Kids in Afterschool Programs	15%	11%
Percentage of Kids in Self Care	26%	25%
Percentage of Kids in Sibling Care	14%	11%
Percentage of Parents Satisfied with Afterschool Program	89%	91%
Percentage of Kids Who Would Participate if a Program were Available	38%	30%

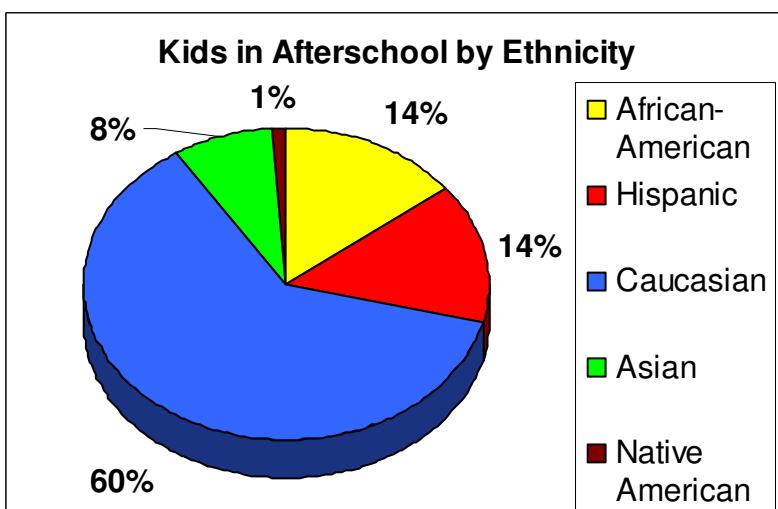


Afterschool Participants: A Profile



The vast majority of the 8.4 million children attending afterschool programs are in elementary school.

On average, kids in afterschool programs participate three days per week for an average of 8.1 hours per week.



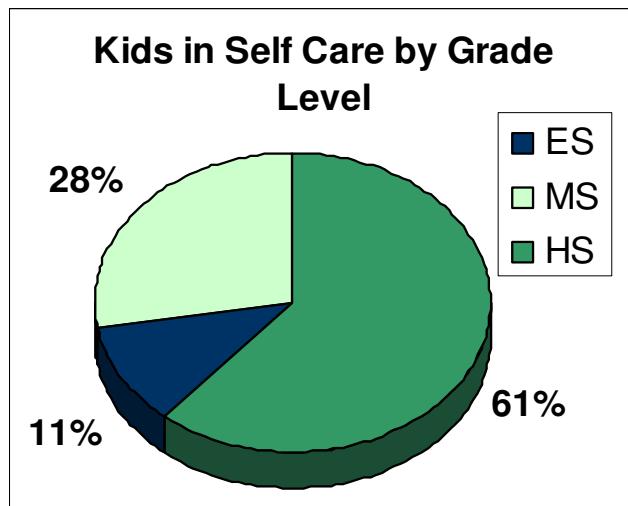
41 percent of kids in afterschool programs are from low-income households.

- As was the case in 2004, nine in 10 parents are satisfied with the afterschool program their child attends. The aspects of programs that produce the highest levels of satisfaction include safety, the convenience of location and hours as well as the quality of care and staff.
- Parents of afterschool participants recognize that afterschool is more than just a safe place for kids. According to these parents, the top benefits of participation include helping with social skills, keeping kids safe, providing opportunities to be physically active and helping their child succeed in school.



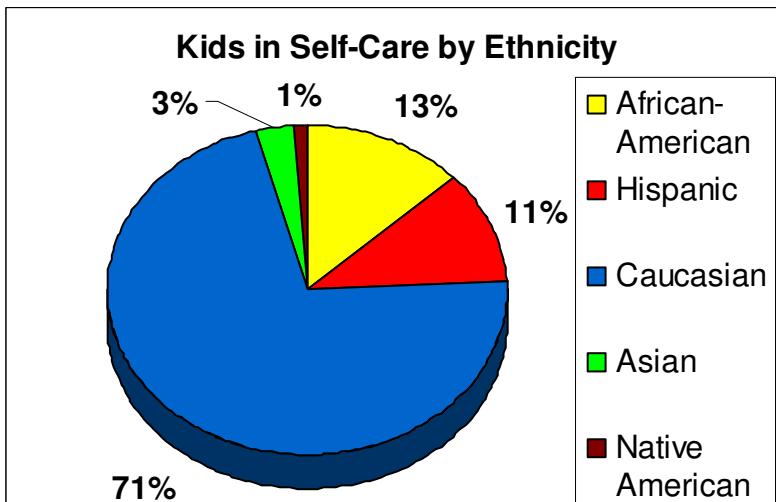
- Parents report that public schools are the largest provider of afterschool programs. YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, religious organizations and private schools round out the top five providers of afterschool programs.
- When asked to think about the factors that played a role in selecting their children's afterschool programs, parents most often cited child enjoyment, followed by convenient location, cost, safety, quality of care and the range of activities available.
- On average, families spend \$67 per week per child for afterschool programs, with programs for younger children (grades K through 5) costing more than programs for older children. The cost of afterschool programs for children in grades K through 5 averages \$70 per week, compared to \$63 per week for children in grades 6 through 8 and \$58 per week for children in grades 9 through 12.
- Only 15 percent of families report receiving any government assistance with fees for afterschool programs. Those families report receiving an average of \$65 per week, which is the average cost reported by families who pay for afterschool programs.

Kids in Self Care: A Profile



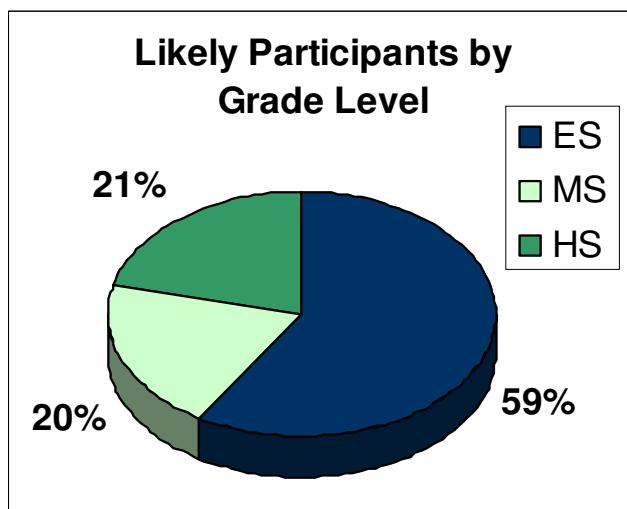
Among the 15.1 million unsupervised kids, the majority are in high school, but a substantial number are in middle school and elementary school.

On average, kids in self care spend 8 hours per week unsupervised.

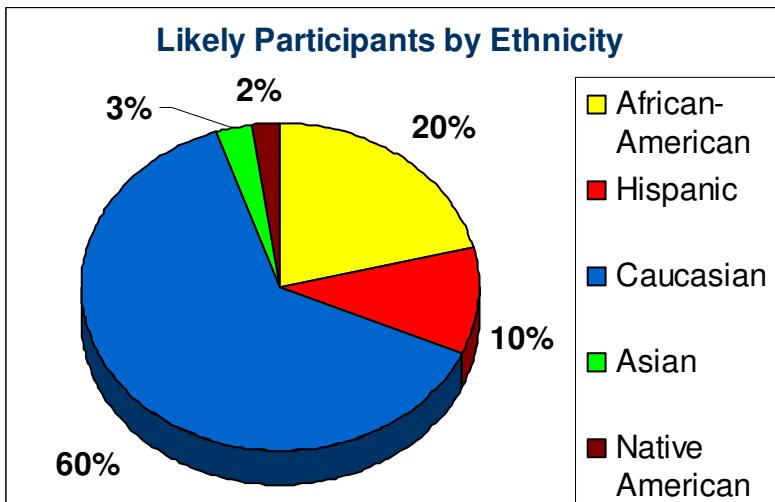


45 percent of kids in self care are from low-income households.

Kids Who Would Participate if Afterschool Programs Were Available: A Profile



Among the 18.5 million likely participants, the majority are in elementary school, with nearly equal percentages in middle school and high school.



52 percent of likely participants are from low-income households.

- Among the array of potential benefits of afterschool, parents who say their kids would participate in afterschool if a program were available are most likely to say that the program would provide a fun experience for their children, would provide opportunities for community service and service learning, would keep their children safe, would provide workforce skills like teamwork and critical thinking, and would provide academic enrichment.
- Aside from the presence of a parent at home during the after school hours, the primary barriers to participation reported by those who would be in a program if one were available include cost and transportation.

Grade Level Findings

There are significant differences in how students at different grade levels spend their after school hours, as well as differences in satisfaction, attitudes toward afterschool programs and barriers to enrollment.

	Elementary School (K-5)	Middle School (6-8)	High School (9-12)
Percentage of Kids in Afterschool Programs	17	12	7
Percentage of Kids in Self Care	4	30	55
Percentage of Kids in Sibling Care	11	13	N/A
Percentage of Kids Who Would Participate if a Program were Available	41	36	32
Percentage of Parents Satisfied with Afterschool Programs	89	88	91



- The parent or guardian is the primary caregiver after the school day ends for elementary (73 percent) and middle school (65 percent) students.
- Among high school age youth, self care is the primary after school care arrangement. (55 percent). Self care is also reported at substantial levels among middle school students (30 percent).
- Four percent of elementary age children are in self care.

By Grade Level Look at Self Care ¹		
Grade level	% of children in grade level in self care	Number of children in self care
Grades K to 5	4%	1,133,989
Grades 6 to 8	30%	3,722,219
Grades 9 to 12	55%	8,640,751
All Grades	26%	15.1 million

Afterschool Program Participation and Satisfaction by Grade Level

Afterschool program participation is highest at the elementary school level, with 17 percent of elementary students participating in afterschool programs, followed by 12 percent of middle school students. Only seven percent of high school students participate in afterschool programs.

By Grade Level Look at Afterschool Participation		
Grade level	% children in grade level in afterschool	Number of children in afterschool
Grades K to 5	17%	4,505,912
Grades 6 to 8	12%	1,391,495
Grades 9 to 12	7%	1,095,297
All Grades	15%	8.4 million

Satisfaction with afterschool programs is strong and comparable across grade levels – nine in 10 parents (89 percent) overall are satisfied with the afterschool programs their children attend.

¹ A note of caution about the self care data: Experts believe parents are hesitant to admit that children are unsupervised, so the numbers reported regarding self care may underestimate the number of children actually in self care.



However, satisfaction with specific features of afterschool programs suggests that different factors drive satisfaction for parents of students of different ages.

- Parents of elementary school aged children report greater satisfaction with location.
- Parents with children in middle school report greater satisfaction with transportation and tutoring.
- Those with children in high school are more satisfied with those areas pertaining to ‘life skills,’ such as access to mentors, workforce skills, technology and community service.

Barriers to Enrollment by Grade Level

After lack of need because a parent is home after school, the top barriers to enrollment vary by grade level.

- Cost and hours of operation are larger hurdles to parents of elementary aged children.
- Quality of care and academics are bigger barriers among parents of non-high school children.
- Availability is a barrier across grade levels, but especially among middle and high school aged children.

By Grade Level Look at Kids Who Would Participate if an Afterschool Program Were Available		
Grade level	% of children in grade level likely to participate	Number of children likely to participate
Grades K to 5	41%	6,546,590
Grades 6 to 8	36%	3,143,596
Grades 9 to 12	32%	3,745,100
All Grades	38%	18.5 million

Differences by Ethnicity

There are significant differences in how children of different ethnic backgrounds spend their after school hours, as well as differences in satisfaction, attitudes toward afterschool programs and barriers to enrollment.

	Caucasian	African-American	Hispanic	Asian-American	Native American
Percentage of Kids in Afterschool Programs	12%	24%	21%	25%	16%
Percentage of Kids in Self Care	29%	28%	21%	24%	24%
Percentage of Kids in Sibling Care	13%	19%	17%	22%	27%



	Caucasian	African-American	Hispanic	Asian-American	Native American
Percentage of Kids Likely to Participate in Afterschool Programs	32%	61%	47%	47%	51%
Percentage of Parents Satisfied with Afterschool Programs	90%	90%	93%	81%	80%
Percentage of Parents in Agreement that Afterschool Programs are Available	59%	60%	59%	59%	22%

- The parent or guardian is the primary caregiver after the school day ends across all ethnic groups.
- A large percentage of Caucasian and African-American children are spending time in self care (29 and 28 percent respectively), while a significantly smaller percentage of Hispanics are responsible for caring for themselves (21 percent).
- Native Americans are least likely to agree that afterschool programs are available (22 percent).
- African-Americans and Native Americans report the highest levels of demand for programs. Sixty-one percent of African-American parents and 51 percent of Native American parents report that their child would likely participate in an afterschool program if one were available in their area.

Afterschool Program Participation and Satisfaction

- Both major minority populations report heavier afterschool program participation than the general population, with nearly one in four African-American (24 percent) and more than one in five Hispanic (21 percent) children participating in an afterschool program, compared to 15 percent of children overall. Asian-American children are also more likely to participate in afterschool programs (25 percent).
- Overall satisfaction with afterschool programs is lowest—but still very high—among Native Americans (80 percent) and Asian-Americans (81 percent).

Barriers to Enrollment

- After lack of need because a parent is home after school, the top barriers to enrollment are similar among ethnic minorities.
 - Cost is the leading barrier for Asian-Americans and Hispanics, while African-Americans are less likely to participate due to a preference for alternative activities.
 - Both Hispanics and African-Americans list lack of sufficient transportation as one of their largest barriers to participation.



Differences by Socioeconomic Status

To examine how afterschool program participation and satisfaction differ by socioeconomic levels, researchers compared households who reported qualifying for free or reduced price lunch to households that do not qualify. Qualification for free or reduced price lunch is a commonly used proxy for families living in or near poverty.

These comparisons revealed significant differences in how children from families of different socioeconomic backgrounds spend their after school hours, as well as differences in satisfaction, attitudes toward afterschool programs and barriers to enrollment.

	Qualify for Free or Reduced Price Lunch	Do Not Qualify for Free or Reduced Price Lunch
Percentage of Kids in Afterschool Programs	18%	14%
Percentage of Kids in Self Care	26%	29%
Percentage of Kids in Sibling Care	18%	13%
Percentage of Kids Likely to Participate in Afterschool Programs	50%	30%
Percentage of Parents Satisfied with Afterschool Programs	90%	88%

- Like the overall population, the parent or guardian is the primary caregiver after the school day ends in families that qualify for free or reduced price lunch (75 percent).
- While children in families that qualify for free or reduced price lunches are less likely to be in self care in the afternoons (26 percent of children in low-income families vs. 29 percent among those who do not qualify), children in low-income families who are unsupervised in the afternoons spend more hours in self care (8.4 per week, on average) than children from higher income families (7.7 hours per week).
- Afterschool program participation is significantly higher among those who qualify for free or reduced price lunch (18 percent) than among those who do not qualify (14 percent). And, 50 percent of families who qualify for free or reduced lunch would participate in an afterschool program if one were available.
- Families that qualify for free or reduced price lunch show slightly higher levels of overall satisfaction with their afterschool programs (90 percent) than the general population (89 percent).
- Aside from lack of need because a parent is home, the top barriers to enrollment differ between those who qualify for free and reduced price lunch and those who do not.
 - In general, parents who qualify for free and reduced price lunch cite as barriers to afterschool participation cost, lack of transportation, and lack of availability more often than parents who do not qualify for free or reduced price lunch.



A Glance Back and Looking Forward to Afterschool for All

The 2004 *America After 3PM* study concluded that the supply of afterschool programs was insufficient to meet the demand, and that the country had much work to do to meet the needs of all children and families. Five years later, there is reason for both hope and concern.

Nearly two million more kids are participating in afterschool programs today than five years ago. Public awareness and appreciation of the benefits these programs provide has also grown, so that today nearly two in five kids who are not in programs would be, if a program were available. Satisfaction with programs is high and has remained steady.

But these new findings are sobering as well. The supply of afterschool programs simply is not keeping up with demand. More kids are in self care now than were in 2004, and parent satisfaction with the availability of afterschool care remains low. In addition, funding for afterschool programs is grossly inadequate, and many programs have been forced to reduce services, increase fees or even shut their doors, just when families need them most. In a 2009 survey of afterschool program leaders, one in 10 reported having to make significant cuts that would result in reduced services or even closing their doors altogether. Further, nearly all programs (89 percent) expected the recession to impact them in the 2009-2010 school year, with more than one-third expecting the recession to “very much” affect their program.

In order for afterschool programs to meet the needs of the 15.1 million children in self care and the 18.5 million children whose parents say they would join a program if one were available, increased investments are needed across all sectors.

Released in early 2009, *The Roadmap to Afterschool for All* found that parents pay more than three-quarters of the afterschool bill, an average of \$2,400 per child per year, or \$65 per child per week. Even among low-income families, the parent contribution makes up 69 percent of the overall cost of afterschool. New data from *America After 3PM* are nearly identical, showing that parents pay an average of \$67 per week for afterschool programs. While it's reasonable to expect parents to pay the costs of caring for their children, the nation benefits when all children have a real chance to learn and thrive. Only significantly greater investment from all sectors will ensure that all children, and particularly those most at-risk, have access to the quality, affordable afterschool programs that can keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families.

History has proven that public and private investments together can create strong, sustainable afterschool networks and engage more children in programs that can help them thrive academically, socially and emotionally. Since 2004, the federal investment in afterschool programs has grown from just under \$1 billion to \$1.13 billion, an increase of 14 percent. That increase in federal investment, coupled with funding from states, cities and philanthropic organizations has spurred greater availability of afterschool programs. Corporations like



JCPenney, which has contributed more than \$80 million to local afterschool programs, have played a key role. And, of course, parents continue to pay the bulk of the costs of afterschool. Over the course of five years, these combined investments have led to a nearly 30 percent increase in the number of kids in afterschool programs (8.4 million now vs. 6.5 million in 2004).

Yet, the demand has also increased over the past five years. The number of kids who would be in an afterschool program if one were available has increased from 15.3 million in 2004 to 18.5 million in 2009. In order to meet the needs of those 18.5 million children, the nation must redouble its efforts to create an *America After 3PM* in which all children have access to quality, affordable afterschool programs – an *America After 3PM* in which every child has a greater opportunity to learn and thrive.

America After 3PM Methodology

The Afterschool Alliance worked with researchers at RTi to collect data via U.S. mail surveys from 29,754 households. The findings are nationally representative. In some instances, the findings have been projected to represent the 57.3 million K-12 youth in the country based on 2007 U.S. Census data. All of the projected estimates are based on data that were weighted by income and ethnicity. The overall margin of error is +/- 0.56 percent.

The methodology used in 2009 was nearly identical to that used 2004. Multiple sampling methodologies were utilized to maximize the scope and reach of this research. To ensure comparability with the original research, and to be most inclusive of all socio-economic strata, mail sampling was completed using IPSOS, a National Mail Panel company. Mail surveys were sent to parents of school age children in each of the 50 states. The random sample out-go reflected the geo-demography of the U.S. population of parents of school age children. Additional screening was done by phone in states with low mail survey completion rates.

Acknowledgements

America After 3PM was sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund. The JCPenney Afterschool Fund is a charitable organization committed to providing children in need with access to life-enriching afterschool programs that inspire children to be smart, strong and socially responsible. To date, JCPenney and the JCPenney Afterschool Fund have contributed more than \$80 million to local afterschool programs in every JCPenney community through partnerships with the YMCA of the USA, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, National 4-H and FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology).

The Afterschool Alliance also thanks RTi for assisting with the survey design, data collection and analysis of the data. Finally, we thank the households who so generously gave of their time by completing the surveys and providing the data for *America After 3PM*.